

VZCZCXRO4445
PP RUEHBC RUEHDE RUEHDIR RUEHKUK RUEHTRO
DE RUEHDO #0538/01 2421317
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
P 301317Z AUG 09
FM AMEMBASSY DOHA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 9355
INFO RUCNIRA/IRAN COLLECTIVE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 DOHA 000538

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 08/16/2019

TAGS: [PREL](#) [QA](#) [IR](#)

SUBJECT: OFFICIAL VISITS BETWEEN QATAR AND IRAN ESCALATE,
MOST LIKELY AT IRAN'S POST-ELECTION REQUEST

REF: A. DOHA 454
[B](#). DOHA 442
[C](#). DOHA 493

Classified By: CDA Mirembe L. Nantongo for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

(C) KEY POINTS

-- The number of high-levels visits between the governments of Qatar and Iran has increased in the last month. This likely stems from Iran's desire for increased international contacts following the controversial Iranian election earlier this year.

-- The most recent proposed visits are by Qatar's Crown Prince to Iran and Iran's Interior Minister to Qatar.

-- Qatar will continue its contacts with Iran to prevent any conflict that could jeopardize trillions of dollars worth of wealth (exploited primarily by Qatar) contained in the vast natural gas field shared by Iran and Qatar.

(C) COMMENTS

-- (C) The announcement and/or holding of six high-level meetings between Qatar and Iran in the past month is noteworthy.

-- (C) The start of this period of heightened activity corresponds with the global fallout from the disputed Iranian presidential elections. Although two of these trips - by the Iranian Speaker to Doha and by the Qatari Army Chief of Staff to Tehran - were planned in advance of the June poll (Refs A and B), the Iranians likely desire a closer relationship at this time to muster whatever international support they can in the aftermath of the disputed Iranian election.

-- (C) For their part, the Qataris see little downside from a temporary surge in meetings with Iranian counterparts. An uptick in contacts over this period, in the GOQ view, is a small price to pay for the continued "working relationship" with Iran that Qatar deems essential to its continued unmolested exploitation of the natural gas field that sits astride their common border.

End Key Points and Comments.

[1](#). (U) Post has knowledge of only one high-level meeting between Qatari and Iranian officials during 2008. This was an August 2008 visit by Qatar's Amir, Hamad Bin Khalifa Al Thani, to Tehran, where he met with Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. The leaders made public statements indicating their countries had friendly relations and expressed hope that the bilateral relationship would expand. (Note: Not long after that visit, Qatar's Heir Apparent, Shaykh Tamim Bin Hamad Al Thani, explained to visiting General Petraeus

that the Amir simply believes a country must speak to its neighbors. End note.)

¶2. (U) Over the past several weeks, however, contacts between senior officials in the government of Qatar and Iran have multiplied. A description of each of these meetings follows.

¶3. (C) The Speaker of the Iranian Parliament, Ali Larijani, visited Doha July 5-6 in the heat of the post-election turmoil in Iran. Although he is one of the most outspoken conservative critics of President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, his visit did not appear to represent a message from Qatar that it was backtracking on its endorsement of the sanctity of the election. It was, instead, the fulfillment of a previously scheduled visit, according to Qatar's Crown Prince, Tamim Bin Hamad Al Thani. Tamim explained July 14 to the Ambassador that it would have been "insulting to the Iranians" to cancel the visit.

¶4. (U) On July 7, the Chief of Staff of Qatar's Armed Forces, Major-General Hamad Bin Ali Al-Attiyah, arrived in Tehran to begin talks on security cooperation with Iran. During this visit, Al-Attiyah met with several high-ranking officials in the Iranian foreign policy and defense establishments, including the Foreign Affairs Minister Manuchehr Mottaki and Defense and Armed Forces Logistics Minister General Mostafa Mohammad-Najjar.

¶5. (C) (Note: The Qataris sought to downplay the significance of these talks both before and after they took place. The Chief of Staff told Ambassador in April that he was likely to

DOHA 00000538 002 OF 002

make a trip to Iran, but that the U.S. should not read too much into it. COS Al-Attiyah later told ASD for International Security Alexander Vershbow and A/S for Political-Military Affairs Andrew Shapiro that he encouraged the Iranians to take the U.S. up on its offers of engagement, citing the President's Cairo speech as evidence of U.S. sincerity. End note.)

¶6. (U) On July 27, Iran's new Ambassador to Qatar, Abdullah Sohrabi, announced that Crown Prince Tamim would be visiting Iran after Ramadan. The purpose of these talks, according to Sohrabi, would be to accelerate the bilateral economic relationship, expanding air links and opening trade centers in each other's respective countries. The Iranian Ambassador also declared that Tamim was now in charge of the Iranian portfolio within the Government of Qatar (see Ref C for Embassy's full analysis of this announcement).

¶7. (U) On August 15, an Iranian newspaper reported that Iran's Interior Minister, Sadeq Mahsouli, would travel to Qatar in the near future in order to help expand relations between the two countries. An Iranian Interior Ministry official was quoted as saying, "The Islamic Republic of Iran seeks expansion of (bilateral) ties between Tehran and Doha." According to media, the Director of International Cooperation in Qatar's Interior Ministry, Saud Abdollah Zaid Al Mahmoud, said Doha is also interested in more robust ties with Tehran and indicated that a delegation from his ministry hoped to travel to Tehran soon. The two countries will reportedly discuss their security relationship during the visit, as well as economic and social issues, including visa and travel requirements and Iranian participation in trade fairs held in Qatar.

¶8. (U) On August 17, an Iranian newspaper reported that Iranian and Qatari frontier guards began a three-day meeting on maintaining security in the Persian Gulf in Tehran. The head of Iran's border contingent reportedly said the Gulf neighbors will sign an agreement addressing such issues as combating piracy at the conclusion of the meeting.

¶9. (U) On August 18, a local English-language newspaper

reported that Chief of Staff Al-Attiyah conferred with the Iranian military attache to Qatar in Doha. According to the newspaper, they discussed bilateral cooperation between Qatar and Iran and how it could be enhanced.

Nantongo